

Amended April 28, 2008

The twenty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2007-2008 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, March 31, 2008. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The meeting began with announcements from the Dean. Dean Call distributed to the members two letters (appended) from Professor Ferguson, Chair of the College Council. The first letter outlined the committee's review of the Honor Code and included their recommendation that the Committee of Six forward to the Faculty a motion to renew the Honor Code for an additional four-year period. The other letter described the College Council's consideration of a draft of a three-year college calendar that would take effect in 2009-2010, and included a recommendation that the Committee of Six forward the draft calendar to the Faculty for approval. The members agreed to discuss these issues at their next meeting. The Dean next asked the members to consider whether there was sufficient business to have a Faculty Meeting on April 15 or May 6. The members agreed that the report of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA) and the report of Professor Cobham-Sander, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity, on diversity and inclusion at the College should be discussed at the next Faculty Meeting. The Dean said that he had consulted with Professor Lembo about how best to distribute the FCAFA's report to the Faculty and about the concerns regarding confidentiality and statistical procedures that had been raised by the Committee of Six. The Dean and Professor Lembo agreed that, once these issues have been addressed, the report should be posted on the Dean of the Faculty's Web site with password protection, so that the report can be accessed only by the Faculty and administration of the College.

Dean Call next informed the Committee that, as the members had requested, he had reviewed the endowment fund descriptions for the Woods and Travis Funds, as well as the language of the bequests that established the Woods and Travis Prizes. He then read to the members from the will of Charles B. Travis, which dates from 1914, and from a 1959 letter from the College Treasurer of the time, Paul Weathers, that alludes to the criteria that should be used to select the winner of the then Woods Prize. He noted that the Faculty voted in 1986 to combine the two prizes and to award what became known as the Woods-Travis Prize to the student with the highest academic standing in the class. Currently given at Commencement, the prize has been awarded on that basis since that time. The members reiterated their view that it would be desirable not to single out students with awards at Commencement and that it would be preferable that the top academic award at Amherst not be based on GPA alone. It was agreed that the original language allows for flexibility and interpretation in regard to the criteria that are used to determine the recipient of the prize. Some members were struck by the absence of the expression 'highest academic standing' (or any equivalent) in either document and by references in both to the recognition of 'improvement.'

Continuing the conversation, Professor O'Hara suggested that, if one wished to move away from the model in which GPA alone was the determinant for the Woods-Travis Prize, a senior honors project might be required. The Committee of Six, when it reviews the theses and transcripts of students who have been recommended by their departments for the designation of *summa*, could possibly choose the winner of the award from among these talented, intellectually engaged, and accomplished students. Other members suggested that departments or individual faculty members might nominate students for the award. Some members felt that it would be best to remain faithful to the original criteria for both awards, which place an emphasis on students demonstrating improvement as individuals and as scholars during their time at Amherst. Professor Servos noted that the "*summa* group" might not demonstrate such improvement, since it is difficult to make the GPA cutoff for the top 25 percent of the class (a requirement for

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*summa*), if students have anything other than excellent grades throughout their time at Amherst. The members then wondered if the winners of the award might be selected from the group of students who are nominated for the designation of *summa* by their departments, on the basis of their thesis work, but who cannot receive the designation because they do not meet the GPA threshold for the top twenty-five percent of the class. In the end, the Committee, the President, and the Dean decided that it would be valuable to consult with the Dean of Students and the Committee on Student Fellowships about this issue and to consider their advice. The Committee then turned to a personnel matter.

The Committee reviewed course proposals and voted six to zero in favor to forward them to the Faculty.

Dean Call next informed the members of his plans to write to the chairs of departments with tenure-track faculty members to remind the chairs of the importance of having annual conversations with assistant professors to offer feedback about teaching and to discuss progress on scholarship. The Committee agreed that, at the time of tenure review, it is invaluable for the Committee of Six to have letters from senior colleagues who have observed and evaluated the candidate's teaching. It was noted that, while it is not required that senior colleagues convey their impressions of classroom visits to the Committee of Six, having this information, in addition to student teaching evaluations and retrospective letters, is very useful to the Committee, and therefore to the candidate. President Marx noted he would like to discuss the process by which the teaching of tenure-track faculty members is evaluated by students. His impression is that the volume and production of the evaluations is overwhelming and that the current system might be improved.

Under "Questions to the Administration," Professor Sinos noted that the minutes of the February 25 meeting include a response from Dean Call that suggests that she had not been clear in stating her concern that faculty members are sometimes not consulted about matters related to teaching and the intellectual life of the College. She was referring not to planning for future building projects, but rather policy matters. The Committee of Six recently felt the need to meet with the Director of Information Technology to address faculty concerns about decisions in that department. The library recently implemented a policy to put all course books in the reserve room despite objections from some faculty members, and the Dean of Students office has been permitting students to drop classes without discussion with the professors. She expressed concern about this pattern and said she feels that it is the job of the Dean and President to set a tone on campus that respects faculty interests in decisions that affect their teaching and research, without requiring the Faculty to intervene to resolve administrative difficulties of this sort. President Marx responded that, in the case of certain administrative matters, for example, the Faculty's concerns about the practices of the Department of Information Technology, it is important that discussion take place to explore what is working and what is not. The Dean concurred and noted that Mr. Schilling had found it very useful to speak with the Committee directly to learn more about the Faculty's needs and concerns.

Continuing the conversation, President Marx said that, at an institution such as Amherst, where faculty governance and faculty involvement in the full range of activities of the College is central, it is important both to protect faculty governance rights and to preserve the Faculty's time so that they can focus on their most important roles—teaching and scholarship. A balance must be found between asking for faculty involvement in everything that goes on at the College and not consulting the Faculty when it is critical that they be consulted. He wondered, for example, whether it was desirable that members of the Committee of Six were asked to spend time meeting with a search firm that is assisting with an administrative search, as was requested just recently. President Marx suggested that the Committee discuss at a future meeting a

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threshold for determining when faculty members should be asked to be involved in College matters that appear to fall outside the purview of individual faculty, departments, and faculty committees.

Professor George next asked the Dean if the Committee would soon begin the process of committee assignments for the next year. Dean Call said that it is his intention that the Committee begin work on other committee assignments once the Committee of Six election is completed. He noted that the final review of the ballot for the Committee of Six election would soon be completed. The Committee then turned to personnel matters.

At the conclusion of the personnel discussion, the Committee turned to Professor Cobham-Sander's report on Diversity and Inclusion at Amherst. The members agreed that the report raises important issues that should be considered by the Faculty. Professor Jagannathan praised the value and insightfulness of the report overall, while commenting that he found its tone to be overly inclusive in regard to one issue. He got a sense from a particular section of what might be described as excessive egalitarianism, that is, a suggestion that it is all right for everyone to be involved in everything at Amherst. While he believes this to be the case when it comes to certain matters, he feels strongly that it is clearly not the case when it comes to who should teach academic courses at Amherst. Professor Jagannathan said that he has noticed a disturbing recent trend at the College that some Trustee-appointed staff members, once they are working at the College, feel that they should be allowed to move into the classroom, in addition to performing their other duties. While he believes that it is acceptable for such individuals to guest-lecture in classes on occasion and even to co-teach for a specified period of time, upon the invitation of a faculty member, he feels that it is important to make clear that the classroom is the domain of the Faculty. Some of the language of the report might suggest otherwise, he noted. Dean Call said that the College has resisted making any administrative appointments that are coupled with teaching appointments (with the exception of regular Amherst faculty who are subsequently appointed to administrative positions).

Professor Frank noted that the diversity report and the FCAFA's report should encourage the Faculty to consider fundamental questions. What is the value of diversity? Why do we aspire to have a diverse community? It's worthwhile to make sure we know why, she said, because both reports argue that not only should minority students and faculty have to adapt to the College, but we should consider how they might *change* the College. The members agreed that the College should consider new approaches to achieving diversity goals when it comes to hiring and retaining faculty of color. The members discussed how issues of diversity might be incorporated into the curriculum, as well as the need to develop a common language that would enable the community to discuss issues of diversity in clear and unambiguous ways. It was agreed that currently, a lack of specificity in this regard hampers open communication. The members said that they look forward to continuing this important conversation with the Faculty as a whole.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call

Dean of the Faculty

AMHERST COLLEGE  
Department of Black Studies

March 27, 2008

Gregory Call  
Dean of the Faculty  
Secretary to the Committee of Six AC # 2209  
Amherst College

Dear Greg,

I write to request that another motion be brought to faculty vote before the end of the current semester. As you know, four years ago both the student body and the faculty voted in a new Honor Code, with the provision that it be re-approved every four years - or once during each student's stay at the College - by both bodies. The College Council has spent a substantial amount of time this year discussing the Honor Code with a variety of constituencies, including representative students, faculty and deans. We concluded that the institution of the Honor Code has had positive effects on our community: there has been a steady decline in the number of reported cases of cheating or plagiarism from an all-time high of 34 in the year before the Honor Code was implemented to a total of 10 in the 2006-07 academic year. We therefore voted unanimously to forward the Honor Code to both the student body and the faculty without modification for reapproval for the next four years. Shortly before spring break, the students held a referendum on the Honor Code, and 91% of the students who participated voted to renew it.

We therefore ask that the Committee of Six forward to the faculty a motion to renew the Honor Code for another four years, until September 2012. Please let me know if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Ferguson  
Chair, College Council

AMHERST COLLEGE  
Department of Black Studies

March 27, 2008

Gregory Call  
Dean of the Faculty  
Secretary to the Committee of Six AC #2209  
Amherst College

Dear Greg,

As you know, every three years the faculty must approve a new three-year calendar. I write on behalf of the College Council to forward to the Committee of Six the enclosed draft of a new calendar, prepared by the registrar and scheduled to take effect for the 2009-10 academic year. The new calendar follows the same general template that our calendar has followed for the last decade or so, with the exception that the usual three-day reading period in the fall semester has had to be shortened to two days in two of the three years as a result of the lateness of the date on which Labor Day falls in those years. The College Council spent a considerable amount of time discussing possible ways in which to extend the reading period in those two years, but in the end we agreed that the disadvantages of those alternatives outweighed the advantages of the longer reading period. As a result, we voted unanimously to forward the calendar proposed by Mr. Mager to the Committee of Six for approval by the faculty before the end of this semester.

Please let me know if you or the Committee of Six has any questions about the enclosed calendar.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Ferguson  
Chair, College Council

JF/kk  
Enclosure

## Amherst College Calendars 2009-2012

Event	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Classes Begin	Tues., Sept. 8	Tues., Sept. 7	Tues., Sept. 6
End of Interchange Registration	Wed., September 16	Wed., September 15	Wed., September 14
Mid-Semester Break	Sat., Oct. 10-Tues, Oct 13	Sat., Oct.9-Tues, Oct 12	Sat., Oct.8-Tues, Oct 11
Pre-Registration for Spring	Thur., Nov. 12-Wed., Nov 18	Thur., Nov. 11-Wed., Nov 17	Thur., Nov. 10-Wed., Nov 16
Thanksgiving Vacation	Sat., Nov 21-Sun, Nov. 29	Sat., Nov 20-Sun, Nov. 28	Sat., Nov 19-Sun., Nov. 27
Last Day of Classes	Wed, Dec. 16	Wed, Dec. 15	Wed, Dec. 14
Reading/Study Period	Thur., Dec 17-Fri., Dec 18	Thur., Dec 16-Fri., Dec 17	Thur., Dec 15-Sat., Dec 17
Examination Period	Sat., Dec. 19-Wed., Dec 23	Sat., Dec. 18-Wed, Dec 22	Sun., Dec. 18-Thu., Dec 22
Grades Due	Mon., Jan. 4	Mon., Jan. 3	Tue., Jan 3
January Term	Mon., Jan 4-Fri., Jan 22	Mon., Jan 3-Fri., Jan 21	Mon., Jan 9-Fri., Jan 27
Classes Begin	Mon., Jan.25	Mon., Jan.24	Mon., Jan.30
End of Interchange Registration	Wed, Feb., 3	Wed., Feb., 2	Wed., Feb., 8
Spring Recess	Sat., Mar., 13-Sun., Mar. 21	Sat., Mar., 12-Sun., Mar. 20	Sat., Mar. 17-Sun., Mar. 25
Pre-Registration for Fall	Mon, Apr.,5-Fri., Apr. 9	Mon, Apr., 4-Fri., Apr. 8	Mon, Apr. 9-Fri., Apr. 13
Last Day of Classes	Fri., May 7	Fri., May 6	Fri., May 11
Reading/Study Period	Sat., May 8-Sun., May 9	Sat., May 7-Sun., May 8	Sat., May 12-Sun., May 13
Examination Period	Mon., May 10-Fri., May 14	Mon., May 9-Fri., May 13	Mon., May 14-Fri., May 18
Grades Due --Senior	Mon., May 17--9:00a.m.	Mon., May 16--9:00a.m.	Mon., May 21--9:00a.m.
Other	Wed., May 19	Wed., May 18	Wed., May 23
Commencement	Sun., May 23	Sun., May 22	Sun., May 27

\*Mon. Classes on Wed., Sept. 9 \*Mon. Classes on Wed., Sept. 8 \*Mon. Classes on Wed., Sept. 7